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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/02/2017

TAGS: [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [TD](#)

SUBJECT: SOUTHCOM COMMANDER STAVRIDIS VISITS TRINIDAD &  
TOBAGO

REF: A) PORT OF SPAIN 581 B) STATE 89510

Classified By: DCM Eugene P. Sweeney for reasons 1.4(B) and (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY - Southcom Commander Admiral James Stavridis visited Trinidad and Tobago June 29 for meetings with Ambassador Austin and Embassy Senior Staff, Prime Minister Patrick Manning, Chief of Defense Staff Edmund Dillon and his regiment chiefs. PM Manning seemed particularly pleased with the meeting. Admiral Stavridis, in response to PM Manning's appeal for security assistance to the Eastern Caribbean, promised that he would seek ways to help. The Admiral proposed a visit by the JIATF South commander to T&T and agreed to a US military presence at an international security/counter-narcotics conference that PM Manning would like to host in Port of Spain. The PM felt that visiting US forces would be eligible for the protections afforded by the GOTT's new Visiting Foreign Forces act. Admiral Stavridis agreed to make available more US training slots for TT service members. END SUMMARY

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Meeting with Prime Minister Manning  
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12. (C) The meeting with PM Patrick Manning went very well. Manning, who is the CARICOM head of government responsible for security matters, greeting the Admiral warmly, saying: &I,ve been waiting a long time for your visit.8 After a review of measures the GOTT has taken, alone and in tandem with other Eastern Caribbean (EC) nations to improve security in the region (detailed in ref a), Manning appealed for USG assistance, in cash and materiel, to help patrol the Eastern Caribbean area. Manning said the region cannot do it all alone, especially the smaller island states, and highlighted the nexus between increased drug trafficking and the escalating crime that is currently plaguing the region. The PM mentioned his recent meeting to this purpose with the ambassadors of the US, France, and the Netherlands, and the UK high commissioner, all representatives of countries that have military assets in the region.

13. (C) Admiral Stavridis praised Manning,s explanation of the issue and his vision in proposing solutions. The Admiral referred indirectly to the lack of an Article 98 agreement with T&T, saying that the USG was restricted in offering certain types of assistance but stressed that he would find ways to help with counter narcotics and counter terror issues and promised to send a message via Ambassador Austin with more formal proposals. He also promised to consult with the head of JIATF South in Key West, Rear Admiral Joseph Nimmich,

and proposed a meeting for him and his staff with senior T&T national security and military officials to see which assets could be brought to bear in the joint counter-narcotics effort. The Admiral suggested a regional conference that could be held at JIATF South in Key West. Manning quickly agreed to the conference idea but said that he would prefer to host it here in Port of Spain. The Admiral agreed.

¶4. (C) PM Manning emphasized that, in addition to the Eastern Caribbean nations already discussed, fellow CARICOM members Jamaica, Belize, Guyana, and Suriname should all be a part of any broader security arrangements agreed upon between the US and CARICOM. He specifically excluded Haiti, however, saying that it was a case apart. He mentioned once again the Caribbean shiprider agreement (ref a) that like-minded CARICOM nations would be signing at the CARICOM head of government meeting in Barbados July 1 ) 4. He also added that CARICOM nations would be signing an agreement on a common arrest warrant.

¶5. (C) Admiral Stavridis then mentioned that we would be seeking the GOTT,s permission to designate US forces arriving in T&T to conduct training this summer as visiting forces under the auspices of T&T,s new Visiting Forces Act, which affords SOFA-like protections. Post had just received a demarche from State (ref b) on June 28 asking us to request such permission via diplomatic note. The PM felt that granting this status would not be a problem and encouraged us to submit the note.

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International Air Show  
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¶6. (SBU) The PM told the Admiral that for several years now he has been wanting to put on an international air show here in T&T and asked if the US would take part. Admiral Stavridis said that he would do his best to make that a reality. The PM suggested April 2008 as the date and said he would appreciate hosting the Blue Angels or Thunderbirds. He also would welcome the visit of a US aircraft carrier to T&T waters. He reacted very favorably to an invitation from the Admiral to tour the USS Albuquerque, a nuclear powered submarine, when it is scheduled to visit T&T in July. The PM mentioned that he enjoys reading and learning about military matters, especially fighter aircraft.

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Meeting with TT Defense Staff  
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¶7. (SBU) Immediately following the meeting with the PM, Admiral Stavridis traveled to the Headquarters for the Trinidad and Tobago Defense force. He was treated to lunch followed by a meeting with the Chief of Defense Staff, Brigadier Edmund Dillon and the heads of the TT Air Guard, TT Coast Guard and TT Regiment. Talks covered the same topics discussed above with the PM as well as a request by all for additional training and support in developing doctrine and policy. Admiral Stavridis recognized the need for additional training opportunities with the U.S. He promised additional slots in both officer and enlisted development programs to include the senior enlisted academies and the Command and General Staff program at Ft. Leavenworth. The Admiral also offered to explore small unit exchanges between the US and Trinidad. Admiral Stavridis then departed, promising that he intends to return for a longer visit in the future.

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Comment  
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¶8. (C) PM Manning was especially pleased, even relieved, to hear Admiral Stavridis's message that help was on the way. Though he was not able to specify what kind of assistance could be offered, Admiral Stavridis clearly struck the right chord in his discussions with Manning in recognizing that

greater USG attention was needed to help in both counter narcotics and counter terror/crime areas. As Manning's party looks set to once again win a governing majority in this year's parliamentary elections, we fully expect that the PM will be able to deliver on his promises to host an international security-related conference in Port of Spain and, his pet project, an air show early in 2008.

AUSTIN